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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT Wednesday, August 21, 1940

Subject: "WOMEN WHO COOK TO SAVE AND EARN." Information from the Farm Security Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Necessity, the mother of invention, has many children among low-income rural families. Today the Farm Security Administration tells about some of these offspring. Perhaps nowhere are ingenuity and resourcefulness more important than providing food for the family.

Sadly enough, many a 'hard-up' farm family doesn't know where its next meal is coming from. One Southern woman, the wife of a Farm Security borrower, said "We wouldn't have much to eat if it weren't for the creek down there in the pasture." Lately she's been serving her family frog legs. She learned how to catch croakers by spearing them, and thus provide her family a delicacy rare even in the better restaurants.

Another woman works in cooperation with Old Man River for much of her livelihood. She manages to serve her family tasty seafood which she herself catches with hook and line. On days when food is scarce, she goes to a place on the river where she knows the fish will bite. The children go fishing, too. They catch more carp than anything else. Carp, of course, is just an everyday sort of fish but this practical woman also smokes and salts it away for winter months, and so far has never had to throw any away.

Frog legs, fish, and fried chicken sound like a rich man's bill o' fare, don't they? Not necessarily. Fried chicken, especially, often finds its way to the simplest tables. The other day a farm wife nearly lost her chance for fried chicken. She set a hen on a nest of eggs, and two days before hatching time, the

hen abandoned her nest. Nothing could persuade her to set again. Anyway, the desperate woman knew if the eggs chilled the least bit, they would be ruined. She couldn't set another hen because the other hens didn't want to set; and she couldn't borrow one from neighbors because neighbors lived too far away. So she declared a state of emergency.

Suddently she thought of the hot water bottle. But whoever heard of hatching chickens with a hot water bottle? Without going into precedents, however, she filled the bottle and put it on the nest. Then she kept re-filling it every time it cooled. Even at night she kept on her job, and for fear she would oversleep, she set the alarm to awaken her every little while.

The next day the eggs began to hatch. Sleepy, surprised eyes appeared through big cracks in the shells. By the second day, almost every egg had become a downy two-footed creature which, if it survives the skillet, will no doubt tell for generations to come how its mother was a hot water bottle!

Another rural homemaker found herself one day with a flock of baby chicks and no heater for her brooder. The heater failed to work and she had no money to fix or replace it. So she invented a heater from a peanut butter jar and a light bulb on a cord, and the story goes that not a single chick died of chills and fever.

Tempting as fried chicken sounds to most people, a Texas woman gets excited over culled hens. She makes delicious chicken hot tamales from them. She not only makes them for her family but she sells them. She has a regular Saturday market in town where she sometimes sells as many as sixteen dozen a day. At 30 cents a dozen that amounts to about $5, and deducting $2 for costs, she still has $3 for her labor.

Even breakfast can be a pleasant meal, says an FSA borrower's wife in Southeast Missouri. This woman fries pancakes for a hungry brood and serves them with

real maple syrup - syrup that never saw the inside of a grocery store. She makes it herself by tapping maple trees. First she bores a little hole in the lower trunk of the tree, and then hangs a bucket on a nail overhead. When she has caught enough juice, she boils it down to the proper consistency and that's all.

Breakfast makes you think of coffee, doesn't it? It's a rare family which can do without its coffee regardless of cost. But a number of women save money by buying green coffee and roasting it themselves. They grind it in old-fashioned coffee mills and not only economize but assure themselves really fresh coffee.

Then there are the milk drinkers in the family - or should be, if there are children. FSA reports that one family couldn't afford a cow. The farm was too rough and hilly to support a cow. But it would support a goat - several goats. Goats cost less to buy and less to feed. They can graze on almost any kind of land, and the more bushes the better. "Mother" admits that at first it was hard to cook with goats' milk and the children didn't like to drink it. But the children got used to it, and she adapted her recipes so that now that unique, 'different' sort of flavor is very much enjoyed.

So it goes with women who must provide meat and drink for their families at lowest cost. Their methods are in nobody's book and are products of skill and initiative alone. The Farm Security Administration reports these experiences in the hope that they may serve as inspiration of other inventive women.

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